



SECTION 4

EXISTING PARK FACILITIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

McGill Associates performed an inventory of the Catawba County parks system. Site visits were made to each park facility, with observations being recorded. A brief analysis of each recreation facility was performed noting any visible improvements needed for that facility. This method of study serves as a 'guide' for Catawba County in its efforts to develop a plan for present and future needs.

An inventory of existing parks and recreation facilities for individual Small Area Plans (SAPs) was performed within Catawba County. Catawba County Schools also provided an inventory of recreational facilities at individual schools within the Catawba County School System. In addition, site visits were made to many of the school grounds to obtain an understanding of the types of facilities and general service areas, which were located within the SAPs.

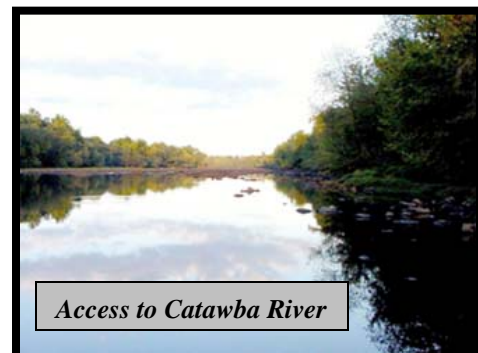
Catawba County residents and visitors have many of their recreation needs met through a variety of amenities offered within the County. In addition to the facilities owned by the County, local municipalities provide numerous opportunities for recreation within the County. School recreation facilities, owned and operated by the Catawba County School System, also provide recreational opportunities that may be used by the public. In addition, many private resources are also available in the area, such as Optimist parks, YMCAs and golf course facilities. Please refer to Appendix Maps 14 & 15: Catawba County Park & Recreation Facilities Inventory, which list public parks in Catawba County and Appendix Map 2 – Existing Facilities. This parks/recreation inventory also lists individual parks within each municipality. Included in the inventory are school facilities that provide recreational amenities.

4.2 FACILITY INVENTORY

County-Owned and Operated Parks and Facilities

Riverbend Park

Riverbend Park is located east of Oxford Dam along the Catawba River. The 450-acre park not only provides a wealth of recreation resources for the County, but also protects the watershed for the Catawba River. The park takes advantage of its proximity to the river by





offering canoeing, fishing, and hiking trails adjacent to the river. Predominantly passive in nature, Riverbend Park's recreational opportunities also include hiking trails, picnic areas, mountain bike trails, and a recently completed dog park. The trail system forms a network which travels throughout the entire park allowing visitors to explore natural resources such as woodlands, flora and fauna. The park office, with restrooms and ADA accessible amenities, is located at the entrance to the park. A maintenance/storage facility is adjacent to the office.

Recreation Amenities

Fishing
Canoe/Kayak access
Picnic areas/grills
Meeting/Educational facility
Educational programming
Picnic shelter
Wildlife habitat viewing areas
Dog Park
ADA Accessible observation platform
Hiking/Walking trails (12 miles)
Mountain biking trails (7.8 miles)



Bakers Mountain Park

Bakers Mountain Park is a regional park, located off Old Shelby Road and developed in 2001. Situated in the southwest portion of the County, Bakers Mountain has the highest elevation in Catawba County (1780 feet). The 189-acre preserve offers recreational opportunities similar to Riverbend Park within a different setting. The vegetation and terrain is very similar to that of the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains, with diverse vegetation and pristine streams. This park



and the surrounding acreage is the largest mature forest remaining in the County. The trail system offers a wide range of difficulty with a one-quarter mile long ADA trail that offers visitors a paved surface for a casual walk and other trails that are more strenuous. Nearly six miles of trail traverse throughout the park, allowing visitors to observe the natural beauty of the forest. An observation platform and gazebo are located near the peak of



Bakers Mountain, offering tremendous views of the Catawba Valley.

Park amenities include office and restroom facilities, two picnic shelters and an educational classroom. There are also several picnic areas throughout the park, which offer opportunities for small families or large groups.



Recreation Amenities

Hiking trails (6 miles)
ADA trail (¼ mile)
Observation platform
Gazebo
Picnic areas & grills
Two picnic shelters
Educational programming
Meeting/Educational facility
Park office and restroom facilities

St. Stephens Community Park

St. Stephens Community Park is an active recreation park, created through land donation and a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant obtained by Catawba County at the request of the St. Stephens Recreational Corporation. It is owned by Catawba County and was operated by the City of Hickory until the park was closed in 2005 when the swimming pool fell into disrepair. The swimming pool currently is functional obsolete and its replacement cost would be prohibitive. Due to declining usage and the existence of parks in close proximity, the City no longer desires to operate the park. Since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive recreation and natural preservation, the County is currently in the process of submitting conversion documents to the state, in order to declare the pool obsolete and renovate and operate the park as a community passive park.

Recreation Amenities

Swimming pool (non operational)
Concrete deck
Bath house
Picnic shelter
Parking lot



County-Owned, Privately Operated Parks and Facilities

Mountain View Recreation Center

Also prior to the formation of the Catawba County Parks Division, the Mountain View Recreation Association requested the County to obtain 5.05 acres of land through a LWCF grant in order to develop the Mountain View Recreation Association site into an active recreation park. This 5.05 acre area is part of a larger complex that is owned and operated by the Mountain View Recreation Association, making a combined center of approximately 15 acres. To remain in compliance with the requirements of the LWCF grant, repairs are necessary to enable the County's area of the facility to meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

It is the intent of this plan that the County's portion of the facility will continue to be operated by Mountain View Recreation Association, since Catawba County Parks Division's goal is to provide passive, as opposed to active recreation.

Recreation Amenities

Ball field
Grandstand with restrooms
Large picnic shelter
Small picnic shelter
Tennis court
Parking



Tennis court at Mountain View Recreation Center

Municipal – Owned and Operated Parks and Facilities

Town of Brookford Facilities

Brookford Park

Town of Catawba Facilities

Hunsucker Park

Town of Claremont Facilities

Claremont Park

Francis R. Sigman Recreation Park

City of Conover Facilities

Downtown Park

Gateway Park

Hines Park

Hunsucker Park

Majestic Park

Southwest Park

Travis Park



City of Hickory Facilities

Civitan Park
Cliff Teague Park
Fairbrook Park
Glenn Hilton Memorial Park
Henry Fork River Regional Rec. Park
Hickory City Park
Hickory Optimist Park
Highland Recreation Center
Jaycee Park
John 'Bud' Geitner - Rotary Park
Kiwanis Park
Neill Clark, Jr. Park
Southside Heights Park
Stanford Park
Taft Broome Park
Westmont Center
Winkler Park
West Hickory Park

Town of Long View Facilities

Longview Recreation Center

Town of Maiden Facilities

Municipal Park
Rosenwald Park
Union Street Park

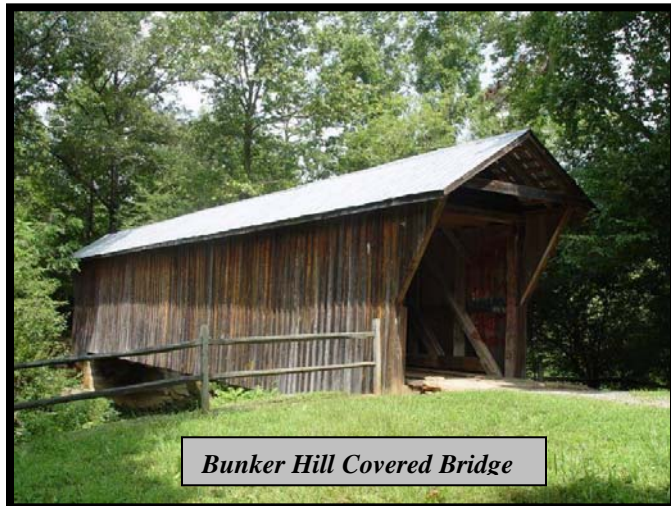
City of Newton Facilities

East Park
Jacob Fork Park
Little Brook Park
Northside Park
Southside Park
Westside/Jaycee Park

Other Privately Owned and Operated Special Facilities

Bunker Hill Covered Bridge

The Bunker Hill Covered Bridge is an important cultural resource for not only Catawba County and the State of North Carolina, but also for its significance as a national presence. Designated as a National Civil Engineering Landmark in 2001, the Bunker Hill Covered Bridge is the only remaining example of a wooden Improved Lattice Truss patented by Civil War General Herman Haupt. It joins the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Dorton Arena in representing North Carolina on this prestigious list.



One of only two original remaining covered bridges in North Carolina, Bunker Hill Covered Bridge was built in 1895 by Andy L. Ramsour.



The bridge, owned by the Catawba County Historical Association, has significant associations not only with the Civil War through Haupt, but also with the American Revolution. Prior to the construction of the bridge, the site was used as a ford crossing Lyle Creek during the Revolutionary War.

This amenity offers a special resource opportunity for the County to provide educational programming for people of all ages and is a main landmark for the County and surrounding region. In addition to educational programming, the site offers opportunities for picnicking and a walking trail to the bridge.

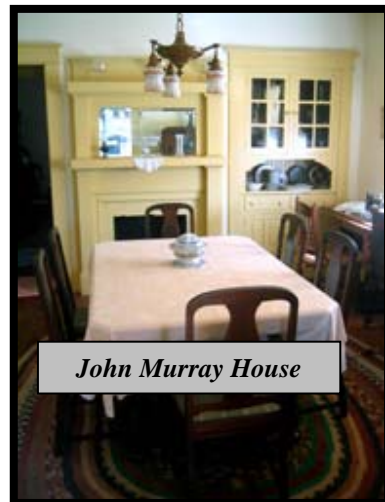
Although the bridge has been recently restored, several areas of the site need improvement. An existing footbridge is in need of continual maintenance and is not ADA compliant. In addition, a small bridge leading to the Bunker Hill Bridge is unstable and in need of major restoration. The stream bank adjacent to the walking trail has continually eroded over the years creating unstable conditions for walking.

The County has recently received a limited grant from North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for a portion of the improvements that are essential to keep the facility operational. The scope of this project includes a new parking area, restroom facility and a pedestrian bridge.

Murray's Mill Historic District

The Murray's Mill Historic District is located in eastern Catawba County along Balls Creek. Preserved intact are the 1913 mill itself; the 1890s Murray & Minges General Store; the 1880s Wheathouse, used as an exhibit gallery; the 1913 John Murray House, furnished to the period; and numerous outbuildings. The structures and surrounding land form the last milling complex in the County, meticulously preserved, owned and interpreted by the Catawba County Historical Association since 1980 when restorations began.

The Mill offers two major annual events during the year. The Catawba County Storytelling Festival, scheduled in the spring, offers the entertaining art of storytelling. In addition, the Murray's Mill Harvest Folk Festival celebrates Catawba County's agricultural heritage with tractors, farm machinery, traditional food preparation and other exhibits. Music is also an important part of this popular festival offering Bluegrass, Country, and Gospel music for the visitors.

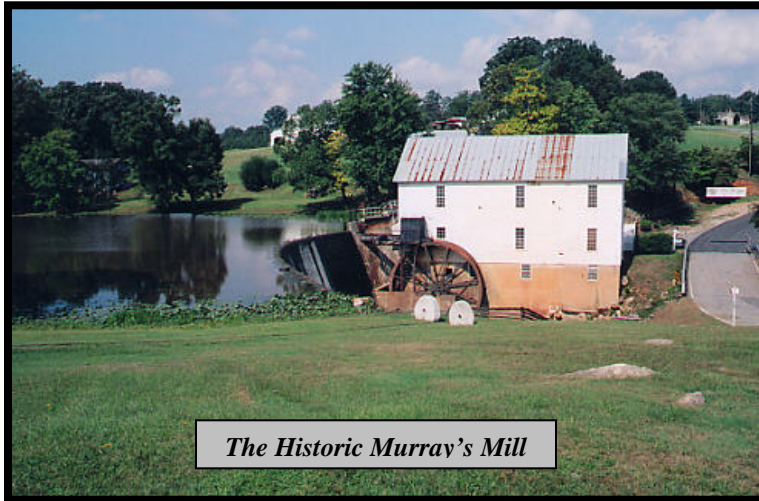


John Murray House



Murrays Mill

The centerpiece of the historic district is Murray's Mill, built by John Murray, whose father, William, had operated a mill on the site since 1883. In 1913, John replaced his father's mill with the current two-story structure, adding a 22 (twenty two) foot overshot waterwheel, in lieu of the former turbine. Making room for the mill's expansion, the Murrays moved the general store at that time to its present location. In 1938, John's son, Lloyd, raised the dam six feet and installed the 28 (twenty eight) foot waterwheel.



The Historic Murray's Mill



General Store

The Murray and Minges General Store

Inside the General Store visitors can enjoy the historic structure which serves as a gift shop and an exhibit gallery. The store is stocked with wooden toys, old-fashioned candy and clothing, which allows patrons to experience the general store as it would have functioned more than a century ago.

School Facilities

A recreational facilities inventory was performed for Catawba County Schools. This inventory was conducted to identify amenities within the school system that may offer potential opportunities for recreation programming. Most of the facilities are used primarily during school hours and may offer opportunities for local community athletic groups to use school facilities for athletic programming. In addition, many of the schools have playgrounds, which offer recreation opportunities.



Catawba County Board of Education Schools

Arndt Middle
Balls Creek Elementary
Bandys High
Banoak Elementary
Blackburn Elementary
Bunker Hill High
Catawba Elementary
Challenger High



Claremont Elementary
Clyde Campbell Elementary
Fred T. Foard High
Jacobs Fork Middle
Lyle Creek Elementary
Maiden Elementary
Maiden High
Mill Creek Middle
Mountain View Elementary
Oxford Elementary
River Bend Middle
Sherrills Ford Elementary
St. Stephens Elementary
St. Stephens High
Startown Elementary
Sweetwater Elementary
Tuttle Elementary
Webb A. Murray Elementary

Hickory City Board of Education Schools

Catawba Valley High
Grandview Middle
Hickory High
Jenkins Elementary
Longview Elementary
Northview Middle
Oakwood Elementary
Southwest Elementary
Viewmont Elementary





Newton-Conover City Board of Education Schools



Newton-Conover High
Newton-Conover Middle
Shuford Elementary
South Newton Elementary
Thorton Elementary
Conover School – serves moderately to severely disabled students countywide

State Schools

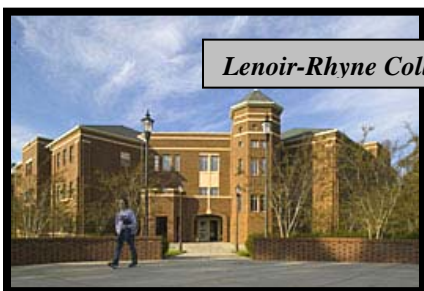
Catawba Valley Community College
Hickory Metro Higher Education Center



CVCC Multi-Purpose Complex

Private Educational Institutions

Chesterbrook Academy
Christian Family Academy



Concordia Christian Day
Hickory Christian Academy
Hickory Day School
Lenoir-Rhyne College
Montessori Children's House of Newton
St. Stephens Lutheran
Tabernacle Christian School
Tri-City Christian School
Visions Charter School
WH Johnston Elementary

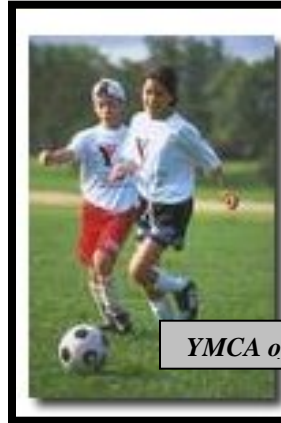


Privately-Owned and Operated Recreation Facilities

The following are private or semi-private recreation facilities that have been included in the inventory of recreation facilities and amenities offered in Catawba County.

Athletic Recreation Park/Facilities

Balls Creek Optimist
Bunker Hill Optimist
Mountain View Recreation, Inc.
Ritchie Field
Sherrills Ford Optimist
Startown Optimist
St. Stephens Optimist
YMCA - Adrian L. Shuford, Jr.
YMCA - Hickory Foundation
YMCA - Valley Connection



YMCA of Catawba Valley

Country Clubs and/or Golf Courses



River Crest Golf Club

Catawba Country Club – Private, 18-holes
Glen Oaks Golf Club – Semi-private, 18-holes
Hampton Heights Golf Club – Public, 18-holes and miniature golf
Lake Hickory Country Club and Catawba Springs Course – Private, 27-holes
Lake Hickory Country Club and Town Course – Private, 9-holes
River Crest Golf Club – Semi-private, 18-holes
Rock Bark Golf & Spa – Semi-private, 36-holes

4.3 Existing Programs and Special Events

The Parks Division offers a wealth of programs and special events throughout the year. The activities and programs are very popular, not only with County residents, but also with tourists and with non-residents who live in the surrounding area.

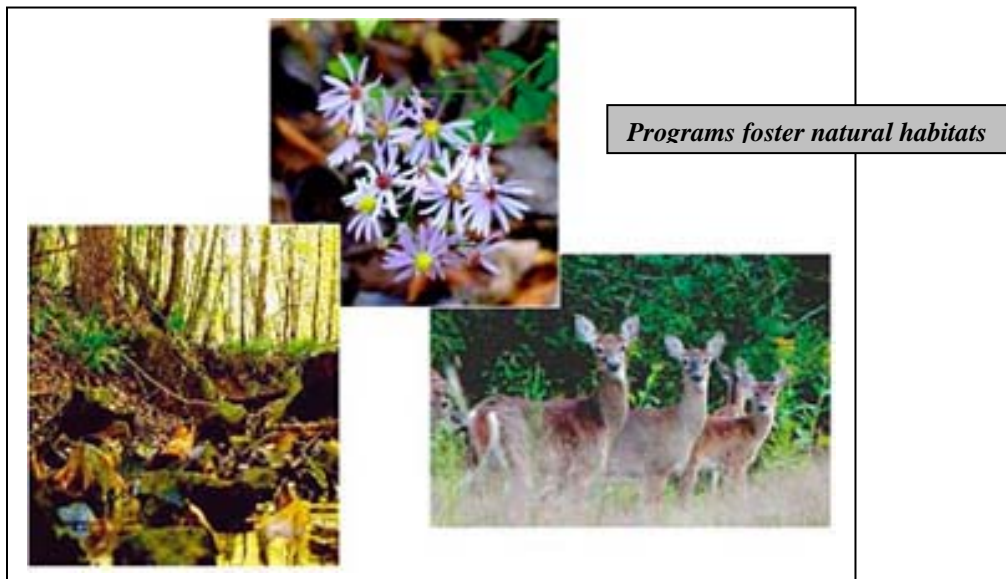
The programs offered allow educational and recreational opportunities for people of all ages throughout the year. Included in the activities and events are



recreation programs, special community events, education programs and other related activities. Programs continue to increase in attendance each year.

Parks Division Program Activities:

Bird banding demonstrations – seasonal;
Collegiate environmental research opportunities;
Conservation programs;
Cross-country track meets;
Educational volunteer opportunities;
Emergency response training courses;
Environmental educational sessions (onsite/offsite);
Geocaching activities;
Guided bird walks – monthly;
Guided wild flower walks – seasonal;
Internship opportunities;
North Carolina State Birding Trail;
Responsible pet ownership/rabies clinics; and
Scout and civic projects.



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